

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1 - 5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently amended): A process for producing a natural cheese, ~~and the process which comprises:~~

(1) adding a lactic acid bacteria starter to a milk component;

(2) forming a curd from the milk component mixed with the lactic acid bacteria starter;

(3) processing thus formed curd to remove whey; and

(4) forming pressed pieces of the curd,

wherein the process further comprises

adding an yeast extract to a—the milk component before formation of a—the curd in step (2); and

fermenting incubating the curd obtained in the above (4), at 20 to 35°C for 16 to 26 hours, to produce the natural cheese,

wherein the lactic acid bacteria starter comprises a lactic acid bacterium belonging to Lactobacillus gasseri having a disinfection potency against Helicobacter pylori; and

wherein the natural cheese comprises a—the lactic acid bacterium belonging to Lactobacillus gasseri having a disinfection potency against Helicobacter pylori, wherein the

~~lactic acid bacterium in the number of is present at a viable count of 10⁷ cfu/g or more when preserved at a temperature of 10°C or less for 6 months.~~

7. (original): The process according to claim 6, wherein the curd is incubated without being cooled after molding and pressing.

8. (canceled):

9. (currently amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 6, wherein ~~the~~ lactic acid bacteria starter is a mixture of the lactic acid bacterium belonging to *Lactobacillus gasseri* having a disinfection potency against *Helicobacter pylori* and another strain of lactic acid bacterium is added to raw milk as a starter.

10. (currently amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 6, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL 2716 (FERM BP-6999) or a mutant thereof.